

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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NATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE

The second annual national youth conference of the United Church, which was held at Aoyama Gakuin University May 2, 3, was eminently successful, exceeding in every way the one held last year. In spite of rain, 1670 youth from all sections of the country and representing 1500 churches and various occupational and cultural groups, including more than 100 from mining, textile, factories and salaried workers, gathered under the slogan "We are disciples of Christ", to discuss Christian evangelism. The enthusiasm and devotion manifested augurs well for 1956 as "Youth Emphasis Year" in the Protestant Centennial program. Speaking at the opening session, Professor Masatoshi Sakurai said in substance, "In the present era science has progressed and given birth to the atomic age. The people of the world depend solely on power. The 'wordly principle' is prevalent. Atheism is rampant. Life has lost its meaning. And man lacks to moral principles to utilize the power of science. In this age let Christians push forward with courage. We are not ashamed of the Gospel." Indicative of the spirit of the rally was its response to a plea for an offering of ¥100,000 to finance a Christian Youth Caravan to Okinawa, this summer. ¥90,000 was contributed.

SS CONVENTION

The National Sunday School Convention, held at Hiroshima on May 3-5, was attended by 728 delegates from all parts of the country.

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Outstanding speakers were Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa, Miss Gertrud Kuecklick, and Isoji Sekiya of the Japan Broadcasting Corporation. An offering of ¥80,000 (approx, \$230.00) was received. On June 10, the Sunday Schools of the United Church will launch a three million yen fund-raising campaign for the World Sunday School Convention. The 1957 Convention will be held in Sendai. Local conventions are scheduled for Hokkaido, Hokuriku, Shikoku and Kyushu this fall.

Interest in Japan's participation in the world SS movement was an Easter offering of yen 48,550 which the students of the Toyo Eiwa Girls School contributed toward the expense of Japanese delegates.

APRIL JAPAN HARVEST

The April issue of Japan Harvest, official organ of the Evangelical Missionary Association of Japan (EMAJ), is just off the press in a greatly enlarged form (44 pages). Articles of special interest to those not affiliated with the Association are a statement regarding the "The Fellowship of EMAJ," "The Mukyo-Kai, Non-Church Movement" by Reiji Oyama, a professor at Tokyo Theological College, a "1956 survey of Protestantism," and "Billy Graham's Message to the Japanese." The survey of Protestantism is probably the most complete to date because of the large number of small missions reported. There are 120 organizations, missionary and Japanese, not affiliated with the National Christian Council, and 95 independent churches which report a total church membership of 98,000. The total Protestant membership is given as 314,401. A symposium on the subject, "Is a Pastor-Missionary Fellowship needed?" will also be of interest.

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

A national conference of Japan Church World Service representatives met at Kutsukake Hot Springs on May 30-June 2 to hear reports and discuss relief measures in connection with Japan's ever-recurring fires and other natural calamities. Local committees are organized in each of the forty-six prefectures where a supply of food, clothing and medicine is held available for the relief of under-privileged groups and for emergency use. The means of closer cooperation with local relief agencies were carefully outlined and problems related to beggars etc. considered. The Reverend Hallam Shorrocks and the Reverend Yoriichi Manabe depart from Haneda for a world conference in Geneva on May 24. Mr. Manabe will return to Japan in June 20, while Mr. Shorrocks arrives back on July 4, after conferring with the New York office. They will carry with them a letter of appreciation to Church World Service and the World Council of Churches for aid given Japan. One hundred and seven persons attended the conference.

RELIEF GIFT FROM CANADA

A special gift of \$2,500 has been received from the United Church of Canada for the relief of children in the mining regions

of northern Kyushu. Because more than seventy thousand men have been un-employed in this area the condition of the children is especially pathetic. Japan Church World Service is assisting with general relief work. The gift came as the result of an appeal by the Reverend Theodor Jaekel, missionary in Kyushu.

PROTESTANT HISTORY IN PREPARATION

Mr. Michio Takaya, librarian of Meiji Gakuin University and well-known authority on Protestant church history, is visiting the United States this summer for approximately three months to collect material for a history of protestant Christianity during the past century. His trip is sponsored by the Asia Foundation. Most of Mr. Takaya's time will be spent in New York and at Harvard University where over three hundred letters of Dr. J. C. Hepburn and material relating to Dr. William S. Clark and Mr. Kanzo Uchimura, founder of the non-church movement, will be microfilmed.

RELIGIOUS JURIDICAL PERSONS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Ministry of Education recently announced the appointment of two Christians to the Religious Juridical Persons Advisory Council. Protestantism is to be represented by Dr. Zenta Watanabe, well-known authority on the Old Testament and professor at Aoyama Gakuin University and honorary minister of the Ginza Church. Dr. Yoshio Kobayashi, professor at Sophia University, is to represent Catholic Christianity. This council advises the Minister of Education on the matters related to incorporated religious organizations.

NARA NCC BRANCH ORGANIZED

A prefectural branch of the National Christian Council was organized in Nara early this month. There are now forty branches throughout the country. Mr. Kiyoshi Hirai, General Secretary of the Council, Secretary Yoshimichi Ebizawa, of the Literature Commission, Mathew Ogawa of AVACO and Masatake Fujita of the Church School Department were present.

CHRISTIAN HOMES

Increasingly the development of Christian homes is being regarded as one of the most important focal points in the spread of Christianity in Japan. Throughout the past century tens of thousands of young people have been baptized, joined the church, and then gradually have drifted away as they have faced the problems of living a Christian life in a non-Christian society. In an attempt to meet this situation the New Life Movement Committee of the National Christian Council is sponsoring a young couples organization which

will concentrate on the problems of making a Christian home. Four hundred churches in the Tokyo area have been canvassed and the first conference will be held on May 27 at the Ginza Church. Dr. Hidenobu Kuwada, President of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary and the Reverend Shinji Iwamura, pastor of the Omori Megumi Church, will be the speakers.

ANTI-PROSTITUTION BILL

The much-disputed anti-prostitution bill finally has been passed by the House of Representatives. Secretary Ai Sasaki of the NCC New Life Commission, who has been working for the passage of the bill, states that "even if the bill becomes law it can be made to appear foolish if it does not apply to street walkers or if rehabilitation provisions are inadequate." "Prostitution will not cease when the law become effective," he continued, "but it will serve to eliminate the evil business and change the attitude of the public." It may be worthwhile to note that the problem of abolition is not as recent as some suppose. About 1789 the Regent, Sadanobu Matsudaira, "proscribed the establishment of new brothels --- and prohibited mixed bathing in the bath-houses of the city (Tokyo)."

TOYA MARU DISASTERS

The Christian Press reports an interesting detail in connection with the Toya Maru disaster in which Mr. Dean Leeper and the Rev. Alfred R. Stone lost their lives. A few days after the disaster a young man, who called himself Kanji Ishizuka, called on the principal of the Iai Girls School in Hakodate with a letter of thanks from two women who said that Mr. Leeper had saved their lives. However, instead of leaving the letter, Mr. Ishizuka said that he would translate it into English and disappeared. Unfortunately, since then nothing has been heard from him or the two women. Mrs. Leeper, however, is anxious to learn any details on her husband's death and hopes that the young man and two women can be located.

EMPRESS HONORED ON MOTHERS DAY

The Christian Federation of Childhood Education held a Mothers Day Conference at Toyo Eiwa Girls School in Tokyo on May 13. Noteworthy among the events of the conference was presentation of a bouquet of carnations to the Empress and discussion of a plan for homes for those who have devoted years of service to child education. The bouquet was contributed by the kindergarten and nursery school children. More than 3,000 matrons and ministers are serving in the seven hundred institutions affiliated in the Federation. Many of them are past retirement age. But because of inadequate, or even no, pensions and the lack of any homes for those without families, they must of necessity continue to work. At the 1955 conference

plans were laid to establish homes and eleven sub-committees were organized throughout the nation to raise funds. Members of the Federation each contribute ¥120 (\$0.33) annually. But this is totally inadequate to attain the objective and funds are urgently needed from other sources. Already one hundred and thirty persons have expressed a desire to enter such homes when completed. According to Miss Hatsue Sato, chairman of the Kanto Committee, no large institution is contemplated. On the contrary, the committee hopes to be able to construct small homes in various parts of the country for a few, even two or three, individuals.

KYUSHU RURAL EVANGELISM

A conference on rural evangelism in Kyushu was held at the Seinan Gakuin Mountain Home (Yama no Ie) May 15-17 under the auspices of the Rural Evangelism Committee of the National Christian Council. Agricultural problems were discussed by Professor Shuji Sawada of Kyushu University; local community problems by Mr. Senichiro Ota of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; and social-economic understanding by Professor Toshi Kimata of the Rural Seminary.

PRISON CHAPLAINS MEET

A National Conference of Prison Chaplains is to meet in Tokyo, May 17-19. Concurrently Christian chaplains affiliated with the United Church will also meet at the Ginza Christian Center on the morning of May 17. In prewar years religious work in prisons was practically a monopoly of Buddhist priests but since World War II other religions also have been permitted to minister to the spiritual needs of prisoners. Among the 1,349 chaplains throughout the nation there are 266 Christian ministers and priests, of which 103 are affiliated with the United Church.

In connection with the amnesty, at the time when the Peace Treaty became effective, these chaplains in cooperation with the Japan Bible Society distributed 10,000 Bible portions. Subsequently, eleven thousand have been distributed, many at the request of the prisoners, through the aid of National Christian Council and the Home Bible League. As a result there have been a number of conversions and even among those under death sentence there have been baptisms within prison walls. One question confronting the chaplains is that of baptism while serving a sentence. In order to avoid those who might be tempted to use this as a means of securing an early parole it has been proposed that baptism be delayed until after discharge and a church home has been established.

Note: In prewar years, there were a few exceptions to the general monopoly of prison work by Buddhists. A few Christian missionaries, notably Miss Caroline MacDonald, were constantly ministering to the prisoners.

IN BRIEF

The 44th General Meeting of the Christian Education Association will be held at St. Paul's University May 29-30.

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Two ecumenical scholarship have been awarded. The Reverend Noboru Shimomura, graduate of Kansai Gakuin, Theological Seminar, Minister of the Sakurai church in Osaka will go to the College of the Bible, Lexington, Kentucky, USA, and the Reverend Shonosuke Zenno, Minister of the Sasebo Church will go to Tübingen University in Germany. These scholarships are provided by NCCC-USA and World Council of Churches respectively.

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Mr. Tokusaburo Ono, President of the Christian Press, died on May 1, 1956. He was president of Aoyama Gakuin University during the war, a member of the executive committee of the United Church, a member of the Social Committee of the NCC, an elder in the Fujimicho Church, and President of the Tokyo Laymen's Association.

